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ABSTRACT

Data from the 1980, 1970, and 1960 censuses were used to describe Pennsylvania's rural women and to compare them with urban women and, in some instances, men. In Pennsylvania in 1980, just 1 rural woman in 25 lived on a farm. These women were more educated, more active in the labor force, and somewhat better paid than their counterparts in 1960 and 1970. They married later, had fewer children, and were more likely to experience divorce. Compared to urban women, rural women had less education, lower incomes, and higher fertility rates. However, rural families headed by women fared better than woman-headed urban families. Gender differences overshadowed many of the differences between rural and urban women. Pennsylvania's women were clearly disadvantaged relative to men, particularly in terms of education, employment, and income. Designed to provide basic information necessary for the development and evaluation of public policies and programs, this report presents detailed information about residence, race, age, education, labor force activity, income, marital status, fertility, and household and family patterns. One section is devoted to the status of elderly rural women. Maps, charts, and data tables are included. (JHZ)

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RURAL WOMEN OF PENNSYLVANIA: A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

by

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Preface

Throughout the short history of the Center for Rural Women, there has been an interest in drawing together existing data about Pennsylvania's women. We decided that a crucial first step was to develop a profile which would identify these women and describe their characteristics. This publication represents the outcome of our efforts.

The Center for Rural Women of The Pennsylvania State University was established in 1982 to address issues concerning the opportunities and problems of rural women and their families in a changing environment. The goals of CRW include research, outreach and training, and networking. The focus on rural women is in recognition of that fact that rural women comprise a substantial proportion of the population in both less developed and more developed countries, including the United States.

The CRW affiliates hope that this publication will be widely used, particularly by those who plan programs and determine policy. We encourage further research concerning rural women because this profile raises as many questions as it provides answers.

Dr. Eloise Murray, Director

Rural Women of Pennsylvania: A Demographic Profile

Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to describe Pennsylvania's women, particularly its rural women.[1] In 1980, about 30 percent — almost two million — of Pennsylvania's women lived in rural areas. They lived on farms, in small towns, and in the nonfarm countryside. This may seem surprising in a time characterized by increasing urbanization. In fact, for Pennsylvania the trend is toward an increased proportion residing outside of urban areas. Rural areas of the state experienced a net increase of almost 300,000 persons between 1970 and 1980 (see Figure 1).

The rurality of individual Pennsylvania counties is indicated by the map shown in Figure 2. Two additional maps are included for the purpose of showing the distribution of rural women throughout the state. The map shown in Figure 3 displays the actual numbers of rural women residing in each county in 1980. The counties with the most rural females are generally located in the southern and central areas of the state while those counties in the northcentral and northeast have fewer rural females. Lancaster and Chester counties record the greatest numbers whereas Cameron and Forest counties have the fewest rural women. Overall, there are almost equal numbers of rural males and females in each county, ranging from 49 to 51 percent female.

But just how important is the rural female population to each county? Are these women more significant in counties having many than in counties having fewer? Some conclusions about this can be drawn from the third map (Figure 4) which shows the percentage of each county's population comprised of rural women. These percentages indicate that rural females form a major segment of most of Pennsylvania's counties. This is true of counties generally thought of as rural, such as the Northern Tier counties, and also in more urban counties such as those around Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Only seven counties have less than ten percent of their population categorized as rural female.

Clearly, information about this important segment of Pennsylvania's population is not only desirable but necessary if these women are to both contribute to and benefit from innumerable policies and programs. In the following sections, rural women are described in terms of characteristics such as residence, race, age, education, labor force activity, income, marital status, fertility, and household and family patterns. The final section describes a special group of women — the elderly.

Although the focus is on rural females, comparable data for Pennsylvania's urban females are provided. In some instances, data are also given for males. Data are derived primarily from the 1960, 1970, and 1980 Censuses of Population (conducted by the Bureau of the Census, United States Department of Commerce). Supplementary sources are indicated when used.[2]

FIGURE 1. PERCENTAGE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S POPULATION DEFINED AS RURAL; 1960, 1970, AND 1980
SOURCE: Data sources for all figures and tables can be found at the end of this report.

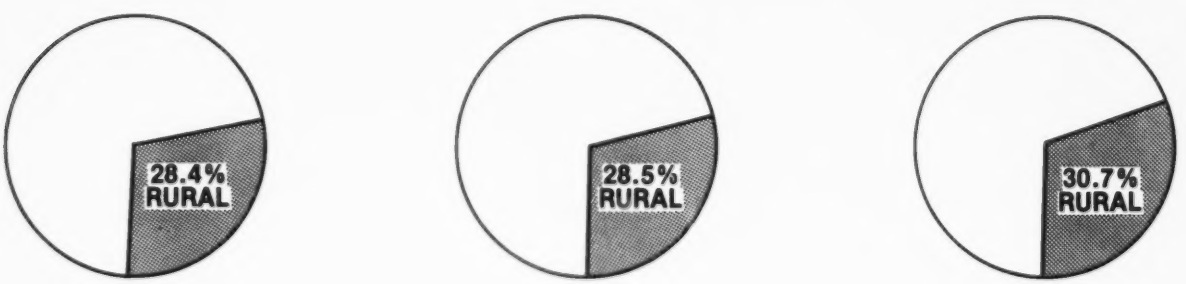

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FIGURE 2. PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY POPULATION DEFINED AS RURAL: 1980

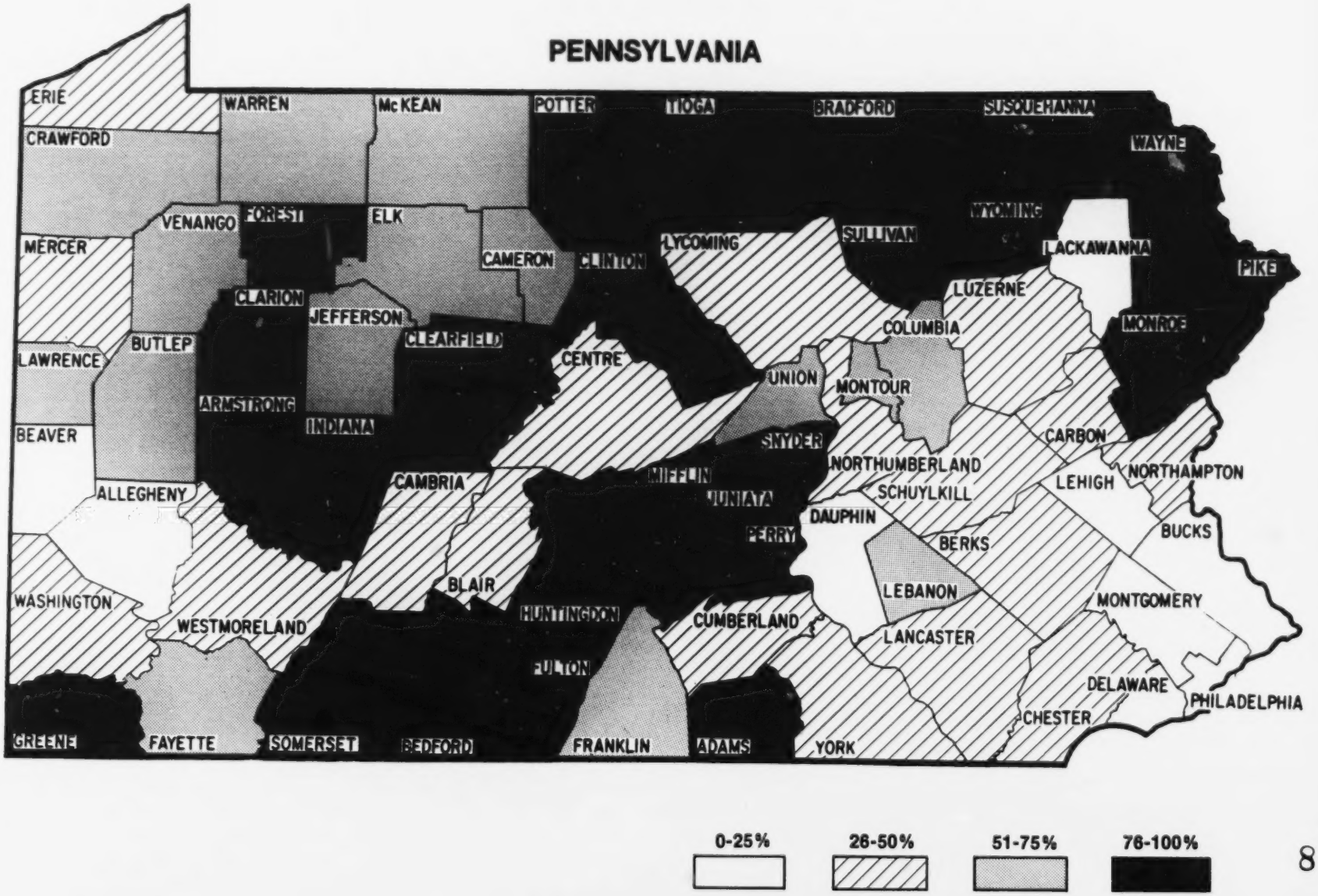

FIGURE 3. NUMBER OF RURAL WOMEN PER COUNTY: 1980

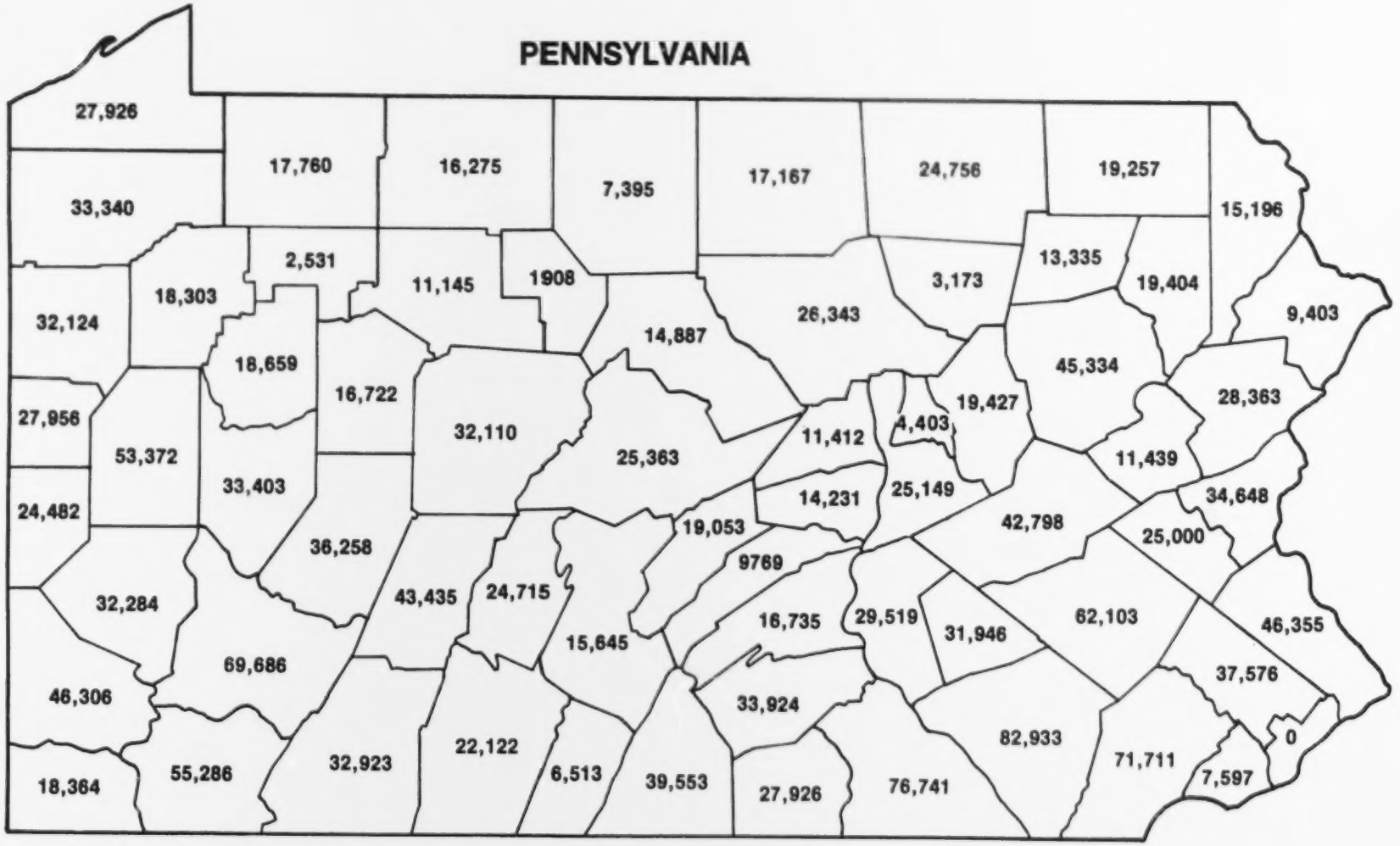

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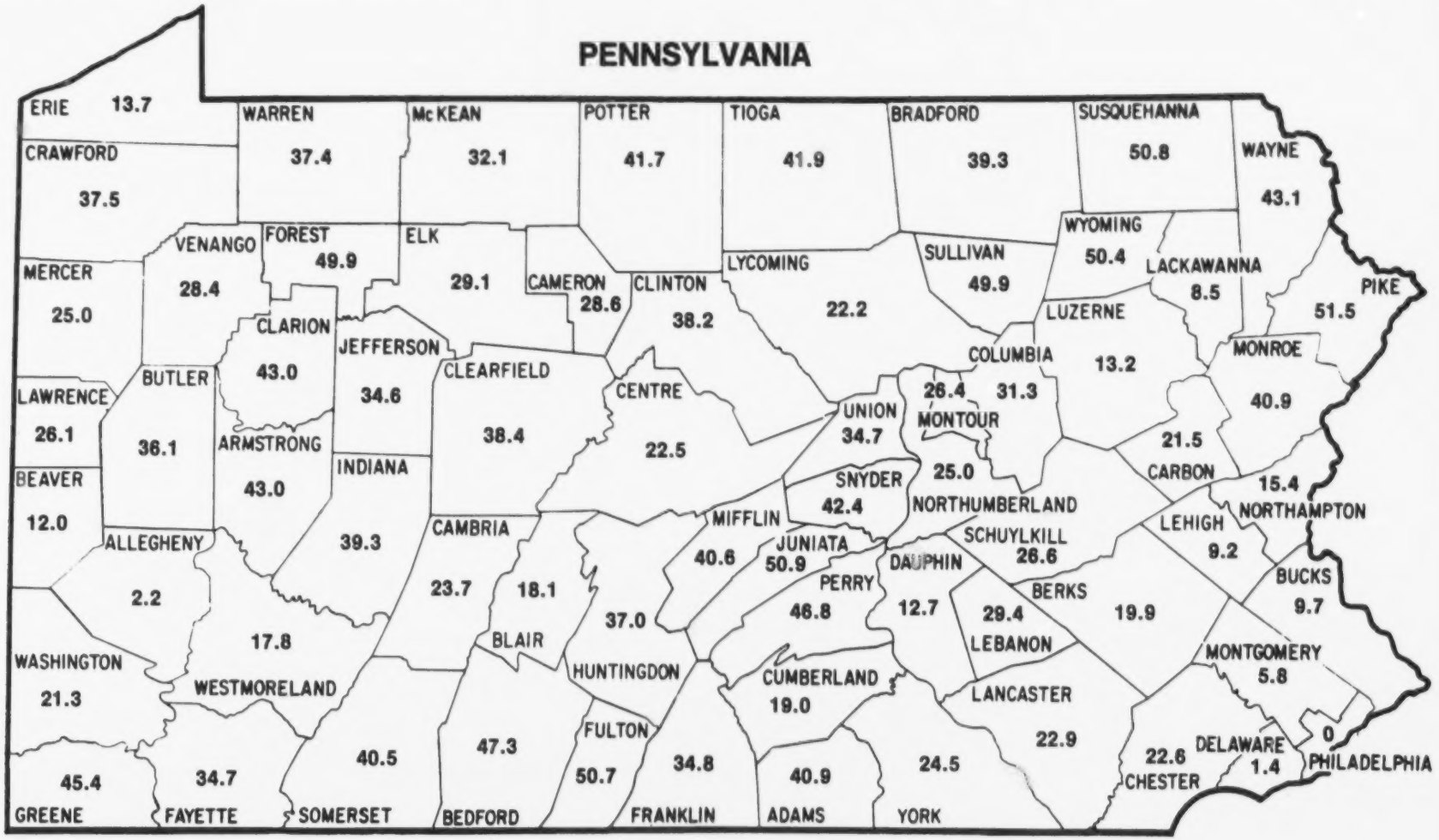
FIGURE 4. PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY POPULATION COMPRISED BY RURAL WOMEN: 1980



Residence

In the past, living in a rural area was generally equated with living on a farm. For many people, "rural" has been associated with the values and life-style traditionally found among farm residents. However, the Census Bureau defines rural in terms of urbanization and population density. Urbanized places are those incorporated places having 2,500 or more residents, as well as other large and densely settled areas.[3] Rural women are those women who live outside of urbanized areas.

These rural areas have farm and nonfarm components. In 1960 and 1970 ten to eleven percent of Pennsylvania's rural women lived on farms. By 1980, this declined to just four percent. Twelve and one-half percent live in small towns and the balance, over 80 percent, live in sparsely-settled unincorporated areas or in villages. In much of this report, we describe farm and nonfarm women separately. However, this distinction is not made when farm and nonfarm women are very similar or when there are too few farm women with particular characteristics to treat them separately. In such instances, "rural" is used to designate all rural women, farm and nonfarm.

Race

Race is an important characteristic when describing American women in general. It is particularly relevant to a description of urban women. However, in rural Pennsylvania, less than one female out of every 100 is black. Half of these women live in counties adjacent to Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area (Westmoreland, Washington, Luzerne, Fayette, Delaware, and Chester counties), whereas the balance of rural black women are scattered throughout the state.

If consideration of race is expanded to include all women who are nonwhite (including Asians and other racial minorities in addition to blacks) the figures for rural women do not change appreciably. Just one percent of all rural females in Pennsylvania were classified as nonwhite in 1980, while over 14 percent of urban women were nonwhite. Given the homogeneous racial composition of rural women, data are not presented separately by race in this report.

Age

In the United States as a whole in 1980, the median ages for urban and rural women were about the same — 30 years. U.S. farm women, considered alone, were older, having a median age of almost 36 years. Pennsylvania women are at variance with this national pattern: (1) the median age for both urban and rural women is older than for the U.S. on the whole, and (2) Pennsylvania's rural women are younger than its urban women, with median ages of 31.8 and 34.7 years, respectively. Each group is somewhat older than in earlier decades, which is to be expected given lower fertility rates and increased life expectancies.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of urban and rural women across broad age groups for 1960, 1970, and 1980; Table 2 presents in detail the age distribution of rural and urban women in 1980. The extremes of the age distribution decribe the population which can be termed "dependent," the children and the elderly. The large middle group of women, ages 15-64, are those women considered eligible for labor force participation. This latter group has the potential for economic independence, the reality of which will be examined in later sections. Over time, the proportion of women in this middle group has increased for all residence categories, reflecting the maturation of the "Baby Boom" generation. This particularly describes women in the age group 25-34. The proportion of each residence group ages 14 and under has decreased while the proportion 65 years of age and older has increased. However, the dependent population segment that is young is still relatively larger than the elderly segment, particularly in rural areas.

TABLE 1. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980

	1960			1970			1980		
Age group	U	RNF	RF	U	RNF	RF	U	RNF	RF
0-14	26.6%	31.1%	31.2%	24.3%	28.6%	28.8%	18.1%	22.8%	25.8%
15-64	62.4	59.9	59.0	62.8	61.2	61.7	65.6	65.1	65.0
65+	11.0	9.0	9.8	13.0	10.2	9.5	16.2	12.1	9.1

U = urban; RNF = rural nonfarm; RF = rural farm.
Note that percents in tables may not add to 100 because of rounding error.

TABLE 2. DETAILED AGE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN BY RESIDENCE: 1980

Age group	Urban		Rural	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0-5	238,855	5.5%	126,322	6.9%
5-14	554,288	12.7	294,084	16.0
15-24	768,768	17.7	303,547	16.6
25-34	624,987	14.4	283,184	15.4
35-44	441,453	10.2	217,484	11.9
45-54	480,233	11.0	199,071	10.9
55-64	532,931	12.3	190,939	10.4
65-74	411,103	7.5	130,492	7.1
75+	295,339	6.8	88,315	4.8
Total	4,347,957		1,833,348	

Some observations about age which have implications for programs and services are:

(1) Although the proportion of rural dependents 14 and less has decreased, there are a substantial number in this age group, many of whom live in families characterized by poverty.

(2) A large portion of the seemingly independent segment of women, both urban and rural, is not doing well economically.

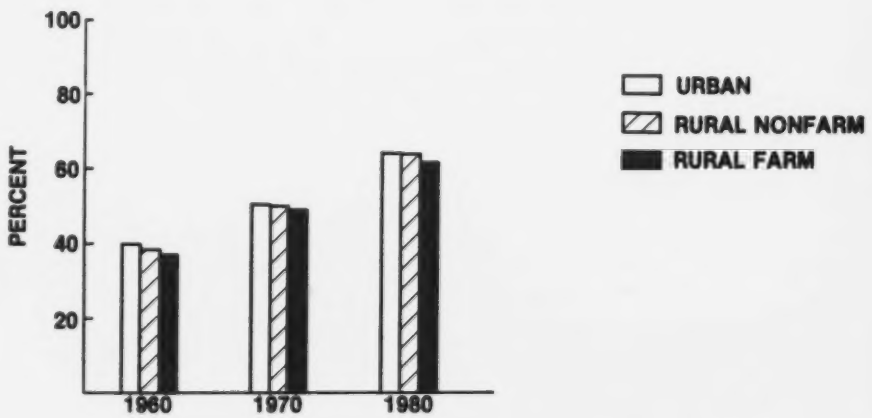
(3) Growth in the number of rural elderly and the proportion of the population represented by this group will continue, giving increased emphasis to the need and demand for a redistribution of scarce services and resources.

Education

The characteristics of Pennsylvania's rural women that have been described thus far are straightforward and each can be considered independently. The characteristics to be described in the following sections are more interdependent, at least as they affect women's lives. Women play multiple roles simultaneously; for example, a woman may be both daughter and student. As an adult, she may still play the role of daughter, adding to this the roles of wife, mother, and worker. Furthermore, she may move in and out of roles as she changes marital status, as her children reach adulthood, and as she experiences occupational change, unemployment, or retirement. Since women are usually students prior to or during movement into adult roles, education is considered first (recognizing that women are increasingly returning for additional education as adults).

Education is an acquired attribute, one which is valued in a broad sense because it socializes and integrates the individual within the larger society, and in a specific sense, because it serves as the key to opportunities, particularly occupational opportunity. A high school diploma is generally acknowledged as being a necessary credential for the majority of jobs. About two-thirds of Pennsylvania's women 25 years and older had, at a minimum, a high school diploma in 1980 (see Figure 5). This is a dramatic change from 1960 when just over one-third had completed high school. This change is particularly impressive when we realize that women who had less than a high school education in 1960 and who did not move out of the state or die, were counted in the 1980 group of women. Comparisons indicate that at each time period, urban women were slightly more likely to complete high school than were rural women, and, among rural women, nonfarm women were slightly more likely to graduate than were farm women.

FIGURE 5. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN HAVING GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL BY RESIDENCE, 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER: 1960, 1970, AND 1980



Many jobs considered desirable in terms of security, compensation, and general working conditions require some education beyond high school. College experiences for men and women 25 years and older in 1980 are compared in Figure 6. For each residence category, more men have some college education than do women. Furthermore, there are pronounced differences by residence with urban men and women obtaining more education than their rural counterparts. This observation should be interpreted cautiously, as there may be a selection factor operating. After education is completed, rural adults with more education (high school or college) may move to urban areas where employment opportunities are greater. If this happens, educational achievement will be greater for urban residents regardless of where the education is obtained.

FIGURE 6. PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS HAVING SOME COLLEGE EDUCATION BY SEX AND BY RESIDENCE, 25 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER: 1980

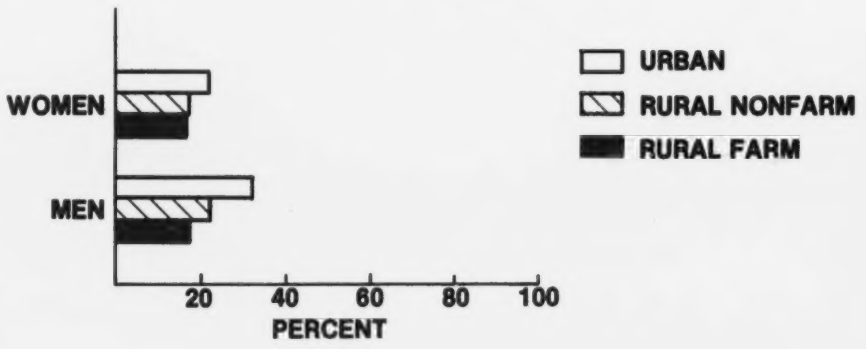
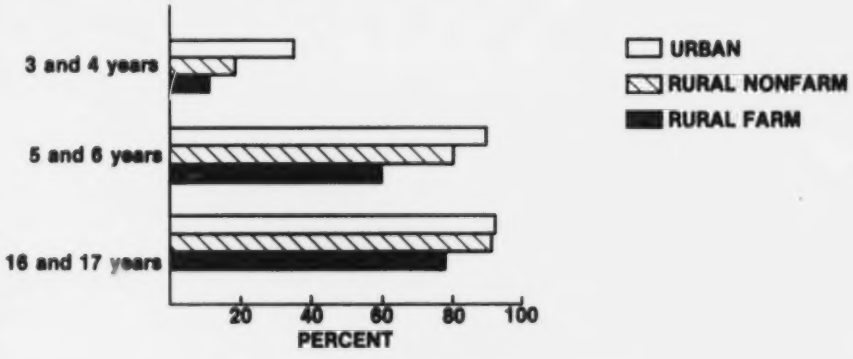


FIGURE 7. PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENROLLED IN SCHOOL BY AGE AND BY RESIDENCE: 1980



Some indication of current urban-rural disparities in educational enrollments and possible educational opportunities is shown in Figure 7, which illustrates 1980 enrollments for the extreme age groups usually considered eligible for basic education. In what might be termed the pre-school years, urban children are definitely advantaged with over one-third enrolled in school, compared with less than one-fifth of rural children. In considering the kindergarten-first grade level, we see that urban enrollments are somewhat higher than those for rural children. However, farm children are much less likely to be enrolled in school than are other rural, as well as urban, five and six year olds. This pattern is also evident for the older extreme, children 16 and 17 years old in 1980. Over 90 percent of urban and nonfarm rural teens are enrolled in school, but the enrollment of farm teens is less than 80 percent.

Labor Force Participation

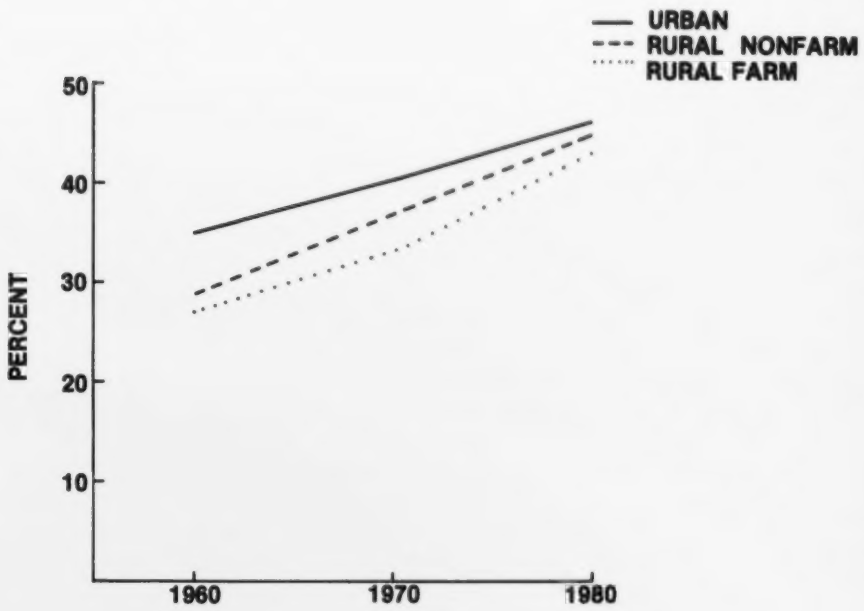
Virtually all women work; however, much of this work has been, and continues to be, invisible. Boulding describes this situation, "much of their productive labor takes place in . . . : the kitchen, the garden, and the nursery" (1977:17). Recently, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of that invisible work. This can be seen in proposals for the extension of social security to homemakers and the insistence by wives that husbands share in home and child care tasks. This recognition is important and timely.

In addition to work associated with homemaking and motherhood, women are increasingly working outside the home. This, too, has recently been the focus of extensive attention and study. As women remain single longer and experience more years of economic independence, sometimes assuming financial responsibilities for children, this topic will grow in significance. This section describes the participation of Pennsylvania's women in the labor force.

The absolute number of women in the labor force, as well as the proportion of the labor force that is female, is increasing. In 1980, almost one-half (45.7 percent) of Pennsylvania's women were in the labor force as compared with about three-fourths of its men.[4] Two out of five of Pennsylvania's labor force, over 2,000,000 workers, are women. Rural women make up about 28 percent of the female labor force.

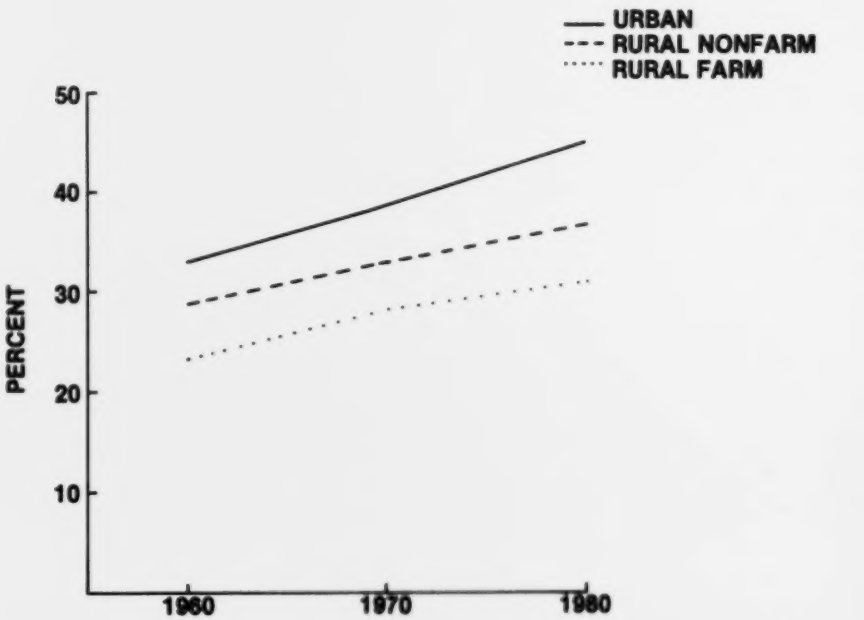
Looking at Figure 8, we see that in 1980, the percentage of adult Pennsylvania women who were active in the labor force varied little by residence, ranging from about 43 percent of rural women to about 46 percent of urban women. Labor force activity increased steadily since 1960, continuing a long-term trend. The rate for rural women increased more rapidly than that for urban women, resulting in the observed near-convergence of rural with urban rates in 1980. When considering this trend it should be noted that rural women are recorded as part of the rural labor force although they may actually work in urban areas. Urban women's work is also defined in terms of residence rather than location of work.

FIGURE 8. PERCENTAGE OF ADULT FEMALES IN LABOR FORCE BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980



The proportion of the total labor force (males and females) that is female has increased steadily also. However, for the period 1960-1980 the female share of the urban labor force has grown more rapidly than the female share of the rural labor force. As Figure 9 indicates, in 1980, 31 percent of the rural labor force was female as compared with about 43 percent of the urban labor force.

FIGURE 9. PERCENTAGE OF LABOR FORCE THAT IS FEMALE BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980



If variability in labor force participation by age and residence is considered, we find that men are more likely to be employed than are women at any age, regardless of residence (see Table 3). Between the ages of 20 and 64, urban women are more likely to be in the labor force than are rural women. Among the very young (ages 16-19) and the elderly (ages 65 and older), farm women are more likely to work than are other women. There is greater variability among residence groups when we consider men. Farm men have the highest rates of labor force participation at all ages. Rural nonfarm men are more similar to urban men than they are to farm men.

Although men are most active in the labor force between the ages of 25 and 54, women are most active when younger, ages 20 through 24. This early peak in work activity is thought to be due to the tendency of women to reduce outside work activity when they marry, especially after they have children. In 1980, 67 percent of women ages 20-24 were reported as in the labor force as compared with about 45 percent of married women living with their husbands, both rural and urban. This can be compared with data for 1970 when approximately 36 percent of married women living with their husbands were in the labor force, an increase from 26 percent in 1960.

We expect that this pattern will be maintained in the future; it will be increasingly likely that women will continue to work after marriage. In part this is because the period of independence prior to marriage has lengthened, resulting in an extended opportunity for an investment of time and resources in work.

Looking at Table 4 which describes occupations held by women in 1980, several salient points emerge. We see that the occupational sector employing the greatest number of Pennsylvanians — technical, sales, and administrative support — also employs the most women. In fact, two-thirds of the employees in this sector are women. This is an indication of the tendency for occupational sectors to be dominated by workers of one sex. Women are also dominant in service occupations. Almost one-fifth of employed women work in this area, but they represent more than one-half of all employees in this sector. Women are fairly well represented in managerial and professional specialties primarily because they dominate educational and health areas. All other occupational sectors are predominantly male.

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE BY AGE AND BY RESIDENCE: 1980

	Urban		Rural nonfarm		Rural farm	
Age group	M	F	M	F	M	F
16-19	46.3%	43.9%	48.5%	42.2%	65.1%	47.3%
20-24	77.0	67.4	87.4	64.9	93.1	65.9
25-54	91.8	60.5	93.9	55.6	97.3	46.8
55-64	72.9	41.2	69.8	35.0	88.2	36.4
65+	17.7	7.4	14.6	5.9	47.7	11.9

M = male; F = female.

TABLE 4. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN BY RESIDENCE: 1980

	Women in this occupation as percent of all employed women		Women in this occupation as percent of all employees in this occupation	
Occupation[1]	U	R	U	R
Technical, sales, and administrative support	47.4%	38.0%	63.7%	63.4%
Managerial and professional specialties	20.7	16.8	39.5	38.4
Service	17.3	19.1	56.4	65.2
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	12.4	21.7	27.2	28.7
Precision production, crafts, and repairs	2.0	2.4	7.1	5.6
Farming, forestry, and fishing	0.2	1.9	17.0	17.2

[1]Occupational order based on proportion of the total labor force in that occupation, ranging from 29.3 percent in the first category (technical, sales, and administrative support) to 1.6 percent in the sixth category (farming, forestry, and fishing). At the time of the 1980 Census, an estimated 4,961,501 persons were employed, of whom 1,493,313 were urban women and 568,856 were rural women.

As Table 5 indicates, industries also tend to be gender specific. Women predominate in services, retail trade, and finance, insurance, and real estate. Almost forty percent of Pennsylvania's employed women worked in the service industry in 1980, constituting over 60 percent of the service labor force. Women are also fairly well represented in public administration and underrepresented in other industries.

Residence is not strongly related to occupational or industrial classification with a few exceptions. Rural women who work are more likely to be operators, fabricators, and laborers located in the manufacturing industry than are urban women. On the other hand, urban women are more likely to be in the technical, sales, and administrative support sector and located in the services or the finance, insurance, and real estate industry than are rural women. Information on farm women is not presented separately as they are very similar to other rural women, with the exception of their involvement in farming. About 29 percent of farm women who are in the labor force are involved in agriculture.

Overall, differences between rural and urban women are insignificant when compared with gender differences. These differences extend beyond the occupational and industrial segregation just described, affecting other aspects of women's work. For the United States as a whole, in 1983 the average women worker with a college education earned less than the average male with a high school diploma (Current Population Reports, P60, No. 146). The average income of women working in sales was half that of men in the same occupation. In 1980, Pennsylvania women who worked full-time in 1979 had just sixty percent of the income of that received by full-time male workers. However, many women do not work or work only part-time. In fact, women are much less likely than men to be employed full-time. They are also less likely to work a full work-year.

Gender equity in labor force participation does exist when unemployment is considered. Men and women in the labor force were about equally likely to experience unemployment in 1979, with almost one of every five workers being out of a job sometime in 1979. A recent study of employment/unemployment in the Northeast indicates that in rural areas, women are somewhat less likely to be affected by recession than are men. This may be due to the stability of the type of industries in which women work. Women's participation in part-time work for low pay could also be a factor, fostering a willingness to adapt to less-than-adequate employment. Overall, unemployed men and women in rural areas of the Northeast appear to have more difficulty becoming reemployed than do urban men and women. Rural workers are also more likely to remain in the labor force looking for work, while urban men and women drop out of the labor force more often, returning to school or to housekeeping (Findeis, 1985).

TABLE 5. INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN BY RESIDENCE: 1980

	Women in this industry as percent of all employed women		Women in this industry as percent of all employees in this industry	
Industry[1]	U	R	U	R
Manufacturing	18.5%	26.9%	29.8%	31.0%
Services	41.3	36.1	60.2	61.3
Retail trade	19.9	19.7	52.5	53.2
Transportation, communication, and other public utilities	3.5	3.2	21.9	16.9
Finance, insurance, real estate	8.0	5.2	58.2	59.0
Construction	0.8	0.9	8.2	5.4
Public administration	4.9	3.3	41.5	37.3
Wholesale trade	2.5	2.1	26.6	22.6
Agriculture	0.3	2.2	26.2	20.1
Mining	0.1	0.3	13.3	3.9
Forestry and fishing	—	—	22.0	13.4

[1]Industrial order based on proportion of the total labor force in that category, ranging from 28.6 percent in the first category (manufacturing) to .03 percent in the eleventh (forestry and fishing). At the time of the 1980 Census, an estimated 4,961,501 persons were employed, of whom 1,493,313 were urban women and 568,856 were rural women.

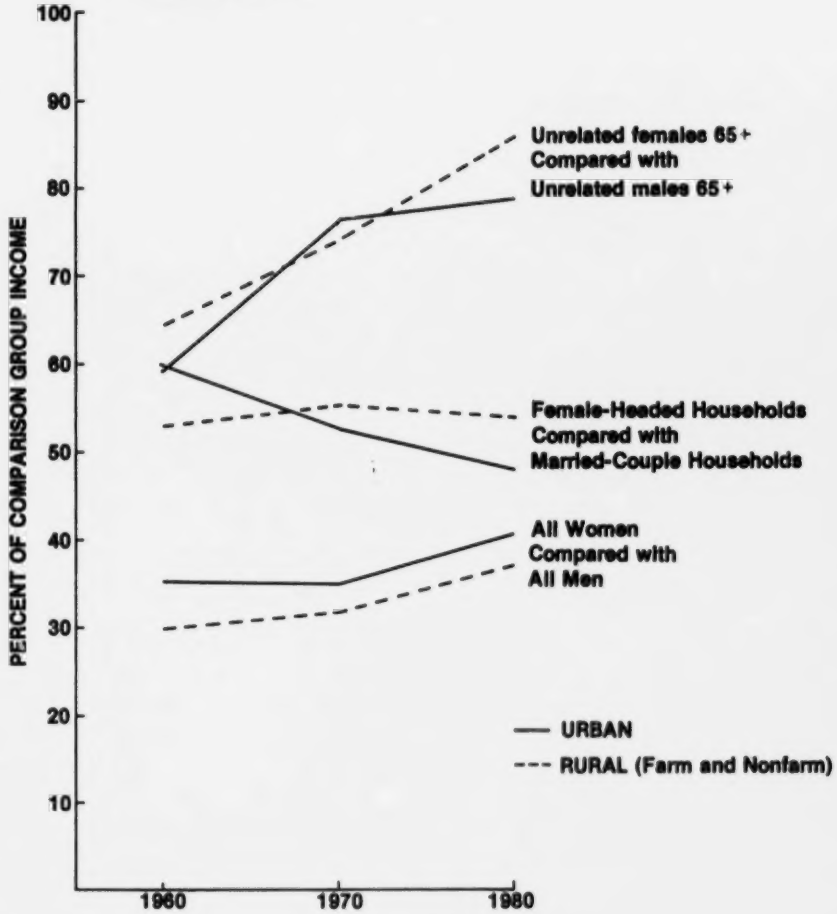
Income

Income is closely related to employment. In 1980, three out of every four of Pennsylvania's households received most of their income in the form of salary and wages. Women living in married-couple families have the highest family incomes, as compared with women who head households and women categorized as unrelated individuals (persons living alone or with nonrelatives). Urban women with husbands as well as unrelated urban women have higher incomes than do their rural counterparts. However, women who head households fare better if they live in rural areas, with women heading farm households having the highest incomes.

In 1980, the median incomes for urban and rural families were approximately the same, $20,000 for urban and $19,522 for rural families. Individual incomes also vary little by residence, but gender differences are substantial. The average male income of $12,544 in 1980 was two and one-half times that of the average female income of $4,927. Actual dollar figures are not given for other years as they are not directly comparable.

Figure 10 illustrates several examples of women's generally disadvantaged economic position. As with labor force characteristics, the differences between men and women are far more pronounced than the differences between rural and urban women. The overall income of women relative to men has increased slightly since 1960, but in 1980, overall female income was only about 40 percent of male income. Between 1960 and 1980, the median income of female-headed families actually declined relative to the income of married-couple families; this is discussed further in a later section. The relative position of elderly women living outside of families did improve significantly between 1960 and 1980, with rural elderly women receiving about 86 percent of comparable male income. This improvement coincides with efforts of the Social Security Administration to promote benefit equity.

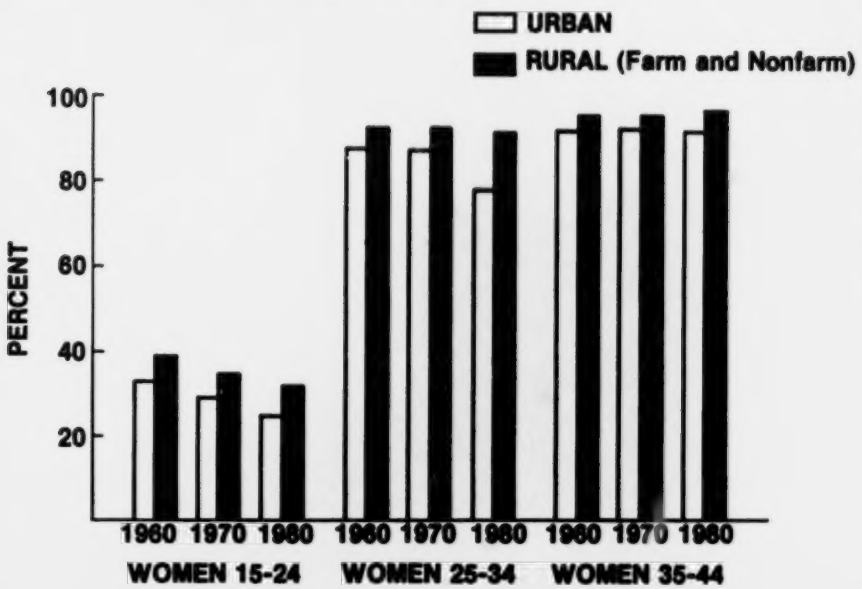
FIGURE 10. MEDIAN INCOME FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS OF WOMEN AS PERCENTAGE OF MEDIAN INCOME OF RELEVANT COMPARISON GROUPS: 1980



Marital Status

Most Pennsylvania women spend the major portion of their adult lives as wives. In 1980, over one-half of all women 15 years and over were currently married. In addition, one out of every five women reported being separated, divorced, or widowed. There have been changes in the patterning of marriage, but experience with marriage itself is almost universal. Looking at Figure 11, we see that in 1960, 1970, and 1980 over 90 percent of women between the ages of 35 and 44 reported having been married at some time. Experience with marriage was also reported by 80 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 34. Rural women were more likely to have been married than were urban women for all age groups; the differences between rural and urban women increased between 1960 and 1980.

FIGURE 11. PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN EVER MARRIED BY AGE AND BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980



The data indicate that in recent years women have been marrying later. The average age at first marriage for all U.S. women was 20.3 years in 1960, rising to 22.1 years in 1980 (Bianchi and Spain, 1983). In Pennsylvania, just one out of four urban women and one out of three rural women between the ages of 15 and 24 reported having been married in 1980. The later age at first marriage means extended periods of social and economic independence for young women. It also typically leads to a later start in childbearing, usually associated with fewer children overall.

Current marital status provides an indication of some of the factors acting on contemporary women and their families. Although over 90 percent of Pennsylvania's women reported having been married at some time, just 71 percent of urban women and 85 percent of rural women 35-44 years of age were currently married in 1980. The discrepancies between percentages of women ever married and currently married are a result of marriage dissolutions. Overall, about 24 percent of urban women and 16 percent of rural women were separated, divorced, or widowed in 1980. As Table 6 shows, death remains the primary cause of marriage dissolution, but divorce has become increasingly important.

It is interesting and informative to compare the marital experiences of men with those of women for 1980. In the age groups through age 34 a greater proportion of women than men are married (see Figure 12). The relationship then reverses and men are more likely to be currently married than are women, with rural men most likely to be married. This is very pronounced for the age group 65 years and over, in which over two-thirds of the men are married as compared with about one-third of the women. Overall, in 1980, there were over 700,000 widows in Pennsylvania. The number of rural widows alone (about 160,000) exceeds the number of all widowers from rural and urban areas combined (about 143,000).

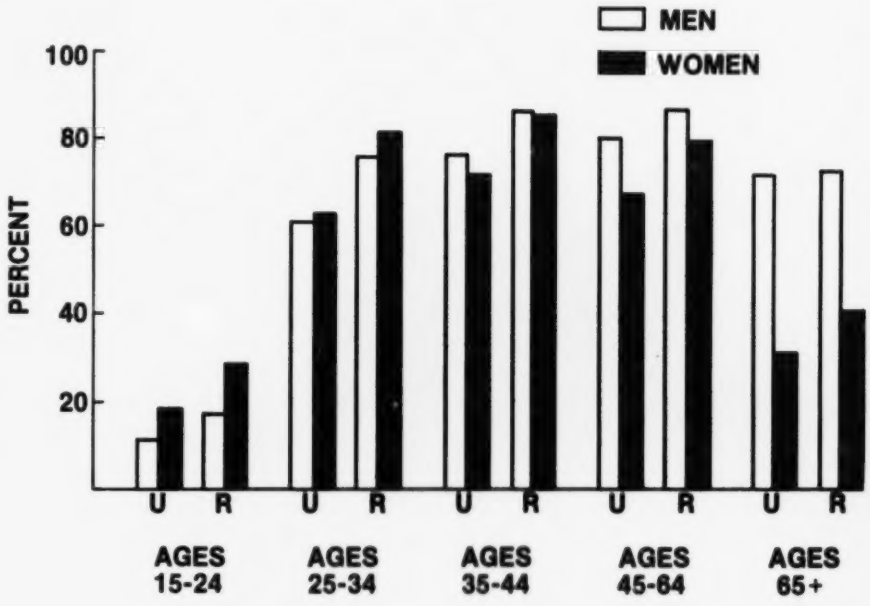
The fact that women report more experience with marriage dissolution than do men has a two-part explanation: (1) differences in life expectancies and mortality mean that women are more likely to have their spouses die, and (2) the resulting scarcity of men as compared with women, the popularity of marriage as a life-style, and cultural factors which support a tendency of men to marry women younger than themselves interact with the result that men are more likely to remarry if widowed or divorced than are women.

These observations indicate the increasing probability that at some time after marriage a woman will find herself in a situation calling for economic self-reliance. This is less true for rural than for urban women. Nevertheless, the large number of rural widows and the growing incidence of divorce suggest that this more-or-less forced independence can be a significant problem for rural women.

TABLE 6. CURRENT MARITAL STATUS OF ADULT WOMEN BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980

Marital status	1960		1970		1980	
	U	R	U	R	U	R
Married	62.4%	69.1%	54.3%	64.8%	49.2%	63.8%
Single	21.8	19.5	25.1	21.3	26.3	19.6
Widowed	13.6	10.2	14.4	10.9	15.2	11.3
Divorced/ separated	4.7	2.3	6.3	3.0	9.2	5.3

FIGURE 12. PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN MARRIED BY AGE AND BY RESIDENCE: 1980



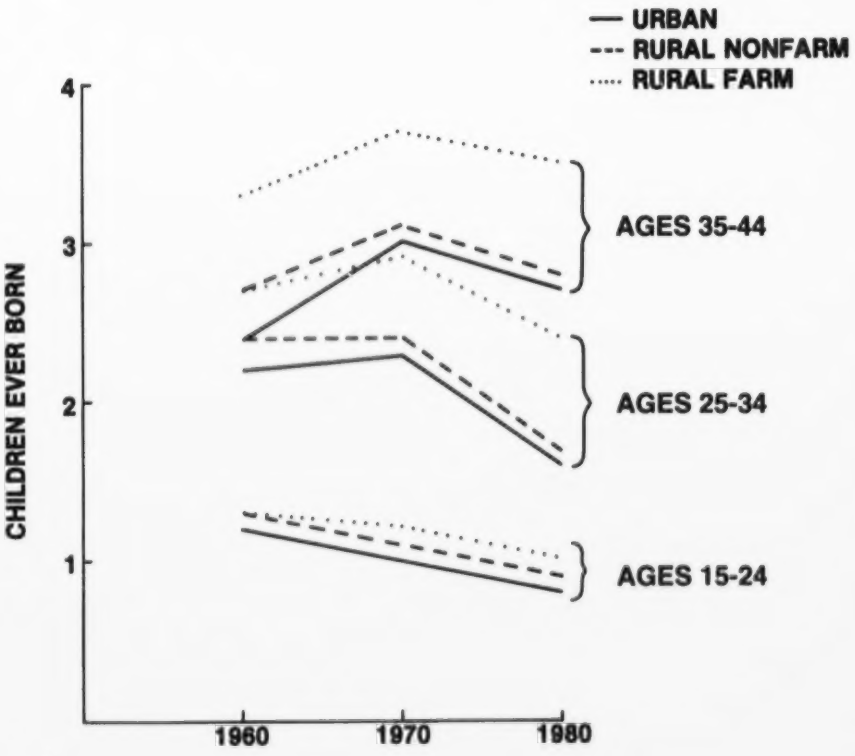
Fertility

Most women who become wives, eventually become mothers. In 1980, less than seven percent of ever-married U.S. women ages 40-44 were childless (Bianchi and Spain, 1983). However, there have been important changes in fertility-related behavior in recent years which have interacted with other factors, such as marriage timing, to influence the timing of births and the total number of children which women are having today, as well as the number they will probably have in the future.

During this century there has been an overall trend toward a smaller completed family size. The average woman between the ages of 45 and 49 in 1910 had four or five children; this number had declined to three by 1940 and has remained at two to three since then, with small variations. Fertility rates for Pennsylvania's women have been somewhat lower than those for U.S. women on the whole (Kennedy, De Jong, and Lichter, 1985).

The recent fertility experiences of Pennsylvania's married women are shown in Figure 13. The average number of children ever born to the youngest age group, women ages 15-24, declined gradually between 1960 and 1980. Women ages 25-34 also had fewer children in 1980, with a more abrupt decline since 1970. This decline followed a slight increase between 1960 and 1970 for this age group. Women ages 35-44 have, for the most part, completed their childbearing. We see that, for this group of women, the number of children ever born was about the same in each time period. Women between the ages of 35 and 44 in 1980 had approximately the same number of children as did women who were those ages in 1960; for this age group, the number of children ever born was highest in 1970. For all but the youngest women, in all periods the levels of urban and rural nonfarm fertility were similar, while the fertility of farm women was appreciably higher. In 1980, the average ever-married Pennsylvania farm woman who was between the ages of 35 and 44 had 3.5 children as compared with 2.7 and 2.8 children for her urban and rural nonfarm counterparts.

FIGURE 13. CHILDREN EVER BORN TO MARRIED WOMEN BY AGE AND BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980



Comparisons of present fertility with projected future fertility rates for Pennsylvania women indicate that fertility is now fairly stable. It is predicted that over the next fifteen years rates will be constant, with the possibility of an increase in expected completed fertility (Kennedy, De Jong, and Lichter, 1985).

The timing of childbearing relative to other events in women's lives has changed in the past decades. Overall, women are starting their families at somewhat older ages; they are spending longer periods living independently, practicing economic self-sufficiency. This general pattern has important exceptions. Some women postpone starting families indefinitely, purposively or unintentionally remaining childless. In 1981, about ten percent of U.S. women expected to remain childless. However, we know that most women marry, and among married women ages 35-44 the seven percent who were childless in 1980 represented a substantial decline from the approximately 20 percent who were childless in 1950 (Bianchi and Spain, 1983).

Of greater social concern are the women who initiate childbearing early, particularly outside of marriage. Absolute numbers as well as rates of illegitimate births have increased dramatically since 1960. In 1960, about four percent of all Pennsylvania births were to unmarried women, rising to 17.5 percent by 1980. Over one-fourth of all births to women 15-24 were illegitimate in 1980. Considering only women 15-19, we find that one-half of their births took place outside of marriage.[5] We cannot make direct urban-rural comparisons, but we do know that in 1980, there were over 7500 illegitimate births to women living in places considered rural or having populations of 10,000 people or less. Most of these mothers were under the age of 25 (78 percent) and almost half (44 percent) were teen-agers. Data based on surveys of all U.S. women indicate that since the early 1970s, the

proportion of births conceived outside of marriage has stabilized. The phenomenon is more evident, as there has been a decrease in the likelihood that the mother would marry prior to birth (O'Connell and Rogers, 1984).

The increase in illegitimate births to young mothers is troubling as research indicates that many of these women and their children may be disadvantaged throughout their lives.[6] Although most will marry at a later time, their marriages have high dissolution rates. Teenage mothers too often experience curtailment of educational and occupational training opportunities. The resulting life-style is dismal for both the mothers and their children. They are likely to live in low-income, single-parent families, headed by women (O'Connell and Rogers, 1984; Baldwin and Cain, 1980). A picture of these families is sketched in the following section.

Household and Family Characteristics

Many of Pennsylvania's women find themselves in living situations which have a great potential to foster problems requiring special attention in the form of policies and programs. This section emphasizes the household and family living situations of a specific group of women, those who are living in families in which they are the family head. Consequences of some of the previously described trends and experiences (e.g., education, employment, income, marital patterns, fertility) for the women and their families are discussed.

The later age of marriage, the increased incidence of separation and divorce, and the growth of illegitimacy lead one to expect that relatively fewer adult women will be found living in a traditional married couple unit, and that a greater proportion will be found living as heads of households or families, as compared with earlier decades. Data for Pennsylvania women show that they, as with all U.S. women, have experienced both consistency and change in living situations. There is consistency in that the married couple family continues to be the dominant unit in which adult women live — more than one-half were living as wives in 1980, representing a decline of about 6 percent since 1960. Eight out of ten urban and nine out of ten rural families were married couple families in 1980. Most children continue to live in two-parent families; this was true for 75 percent of urban children and over 85 percent of rural children in 1980.

However, in 1980, there was also evidence of change. There are over 430,000 non-traditional Pennsylvania families headed by women who do not have husbands present, and 78,000 of these families are in rural areas.[7] Female-headed family characteristics are compared with general family characteristics in Table 7. On the whole, female-headed families differ only slightly from all families in regard to the presence of children. This is not surprising considering that families by definition must contain related persons; it does reflect the fact that children are more likely to live with their mothers. Note that female-headed rural families are less likely to have children present under the age of six as compared with all rural families. This could be due to less illegitimacy in rural areas or to lower divorce rates in rural families with small children. Alternatively, rural women with small children may live with their own parents or move to urban areas, in which case they would be identified as urban.

Women who headed families in 1980 were less likely to be in the labor force as compared with family heads in general. This is reflected by the median income for these families, which is only half that of all families. If just families with children under 18 are considered, the poor economic situation becomes exacerbated. The overall median income for all families having children increases relative to family income in general. However, among female-headed families, those with children under 18 have substantially lower incomes than do female-headed families in general. Presumably these low-income families are ones in which the household head is not in the labor force, or if she is employed, her work may be part-time and/or poorly paid. Rural-urban differences are slight in respect to these income and employment factors. However, woman-headed families with children who live in rural areas do somewhat better than similar urban families, having incomes about 15 percent greater.

TABLE 7. CHARACTERISTICS OF ALL FAMILIES COMPARED WITH CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE-HEADED FAMILIES BY RESIDENCE: 1980

Characteristic	All families		Female-headed families	
	U	R	U	R
Families with children under 18	46.8%	52.1%	50.7%	49.2%
Families with children under 6	18.2%	21.7%	16.1%	13.1%
Families with head in the labor force	73.3%	79.1%	50.1%	51.8%
Median family income	$20,230	$19,522	$10,633	$10,974
Median income for families with children under 18	$20,473	$20,231	$ 7,227	$ 8,237
Families with median income below poverty level	8.4%	6.5%	28.5%	22.6%
Families with children under 18 having median income below poverty level	13.3%	8.5%	43.9%	34.5%

Some estimate of how well families are able to meet basic needs is provided by considering the characteristics of families who are below the "poverty level." The poverty level was defined by the Federal government in 1964, and since that time it has been revised annually, based largely on food costs and adjusted for family size. In its first Census application in 1970, about one out of every thirteen Pennsylvania families was found to have an income below the poverty line, while one out of every three female-headed families fell into this category. In 1980, as in 1970, those with children under 18 were more likely to be below the poverty level as compared with all families. Female-headed families with children under 18 are even worse off, as they are at least three times more likely to be poor than are families with children in general.

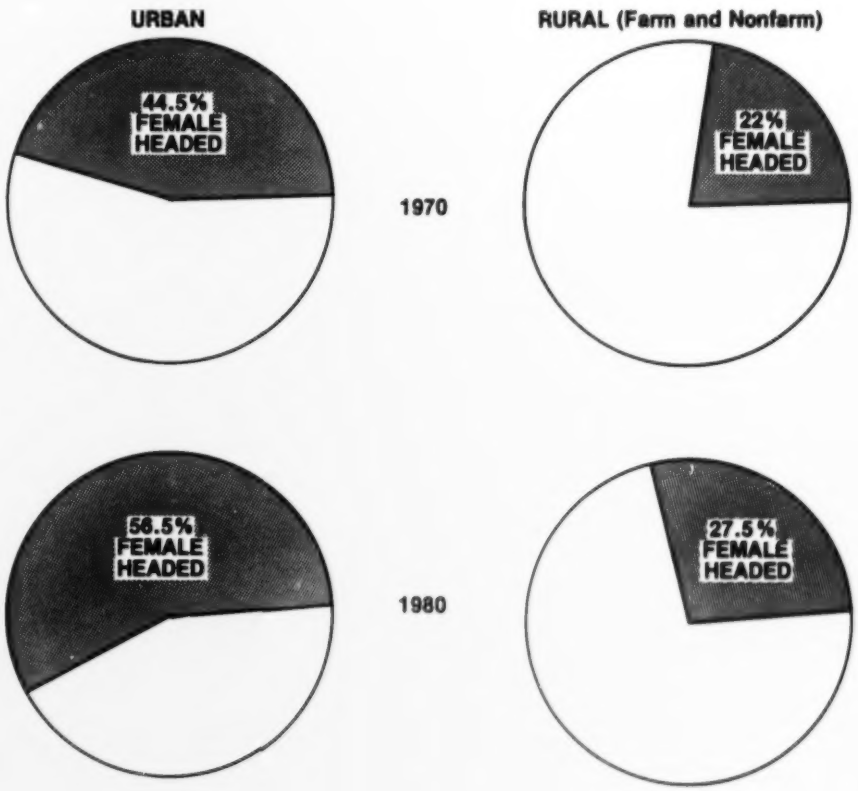
Overall, between 1970 and 1980 poverty increased somewhat in urban areas and decreased in rural areas. There are indications that farm families are more likely to be poor than are other rural families, but that female-headed farm families may do somewhat better than other female-headed families. However, there were so few female-headed Pennsylvania farm families below the poverty level in 1980 (an estimated 235) that separate analyses of them are not presented.

Although the fraction of woman-headed families living in poverty showed little change between 1970 and 1980 (about 27 percent), it was found that as the incidence of woman-headed families increased, so did the share of poverty falling to this group of families. Thus, while in 1970 38 percent of all Pennsylvania families having incomes below the poverty level were headed by women, in 1980 almost one-half of all poverty level families had female heads (see Figure 14).

These figures suggest that in spite of increased education and labor force experience for women in general, a substantial number of female heads (about 120,000) lack the necessary preparation and opportunity to provide their families with the minimum necessities. Although these families are located primarily in urban areas, almost 18,000 rural families headed by women are characterized by poverty.

This section has emphasized the family and living situations of women, particularly rural women. This is not meant to imply that more traditional families with male heads don't experience problems. We do, however, want to emphasize that many families headed by women are suffering and that this situation has increased disproportionately over the last decade. These women and their families deserve to have attention focused on creative solutions to these problems.

FIGURE 14. PERCENTAGE OF ALL FAMILIES WITH INCOMES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL HAVING FEMALE HEADS BY RESIDENCE: 1970 AND 1980



The Living Situation of the Elderly

As was pointed out earlier, that segment of the population which can be termed "elderly," that is 65 years of age and older, is growing, both in numbers and in the proportion of the population which this age group represents. Pennsylvania ranks fourth in the number of state residents 65 years of age and older and seventh in the proportion of the state's population which is elderly (Current Population Reports, P23, No. 138). In 1980, there were over 1,500,000 elderly in Pennsylvania, sixty percent of whom were women. This is an increase from 1960 when 55 percent of the 1,100,000 elderly were women. The proportion of the elderly who are female is higher in urban areas, which may be explained by a propensity of older rural women to move to urban areas, particularly when widowed. Nevertheless, females comprise a majority of the elderly in rural areas, also.

Enormous progress has been made in increasing life expectancies. However, mortality discriminates and generally speaking, men have shorter life expectancies than do women. For (white) babies born in Pennsylvania in 1980, the expectation of life at birth was 70.6 years for males and 77.9 years for females (Lichter, De Jong, and Kennedy, 1985). The consequences of gender discrimination in respect to mortality can be seen in Table 8. In spite of the strides made in postponing death, women are more likely to outlive men and this gap has been widening. For those who were the oldest elderly, 85 years and older (considered the "frail"), seven out of ten were women in 1980. Projected survival rates for the next fifteen years indicate little change in this pattern (Lichter, De Jong, and Kennedy, 1985).

In an earlier section, it was pointed out that elderly males are likely to be married while elderly females are likely to be widows. This suggests that these women will have living situations and associated needs that differ considerably from those of elderly men. In 1980, most elderly men lived with their spouses and about one out of six lived alone or with non-relatives. In contrast, less than one-third of women ages 65 years and older lived with a husband, while an additional one-third lived alone or with non-relatives as household head (primarily alone).[8]

In 1980, approximately 12 percent of all persons, urban and rural, 65 years of age and over had incomes below the poverty level. However, when only unrelated persons were considered, that is those not living with relatives, 26 percent of Pennsylvania's urban and rural elderly were found to have incomes below the poverty level. Recognizing that in 1980 there were half again as many elderly women as men, and that a large proportion of these women lived alone, it is clear that there is ample reason to be concerned about the quality of life of our elderly rural women.

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF ELDERLY POPULATION FEMALE BY RESIDENCE: 1960, 1970, AND 1980

	1960		1970		1980	
Age group	U	R	U	R	U	R
65-69	54.5%	49.5%	57.4%	51.6%	57.6%	52.0%
70-74	55.9	50.0	59.6	53.2	60.7	54.4
75-79	57.9	50.6	61.3	54.7	64.5	57.5
80-84	60.7	52.8	63.9	57.5	67.6	61.5
85+	64.5	57.3	66.4	60.5	71.0	67.0

Conclusions

The purpose of this report is to describe Pennsylvania's rural women in terms of their demographic characteristics. This basic information is necessary for the development and evaluation of public policies and programs. It also provides benchmark data, allowing comparisons to be made with other population groups, both now and in the future. Finally, such a profile suggests topics and problem areas for further study, research, and action.

The primary data source is the 1980 Census, supplemented by data from the 1960 and 1970 Censuses to permit an evaluation of change over time. To enhance the utility of the description, rural women are compared with urban woman and, in some instances, with men.

Traditionally, in the public mind rural has been defined as synonymous with agriculture. However, in Pennsylvania in 1980, just one rural woman out of every twenty-five lived on a farm. Rural women are more educated, more active in the labor force, and have somewhat higher incomes than did their counterparts in 1960 and 1970. They marry later, have fewer children, and are more likely to experience divorce. Rural women today can expect to live a long life, spending most of their later years as widows.

Although urban women can be described similarly, there are important residential differences. Rural women are less advantaged than urban women in terms of education and income. Compared with urban women, they are somewhat more traditional in that they marry younger, have higher fertility rates, and are more likely to be currently married, regardless of age. Rural women are family heads less often than are urban women. When rural women do head families, they and their families fare better than do woman-headed urban families.

These differences between rural and urban women are, in several instances, overshadowed by gender differences. It is clear that in spite of changes in the educational and occupational structure, Pennsylvania's women are disadvantaged relative to men, particularly in terms of education, employment, and income. Rural and urban women have lower levels of education than men and are less active in the labor force. When they are in the labor force, they tend to work in occupations and industries that are predominantly female, characterized by lower pay. Female incomes are substantially lower than male incomes. This is vividly illustrated by the fact that families living at or below the poverty level are increasingly headed by women.

A descriptive study such as this always stimulates more questions than it answers. We have confined ourselves to a limited range of issues, using a fraction of the data sources available. An expanded list of issues could be generated — issues deserving further study and research. We are confident that individual readers are developing personal agendas.

Notes

[1]The terms rural woman and rural female are used interchangably in this report to indicate all rural females, regardless of age. When special age categories are being considered, this is indicated.

[2]Much of the data involving social and economic characteristics are based on the responses of samples of the population. Because of this, these data may differ somewhat from data that would be obtained from a complete count of all persons. However, since our units of analysis are subgroups of the state's population, we are confident that our observations and generalizations are sound. Readers wanting detailed information on definitions and sampling procedures are referred to *Characteristics of the Population*, Pennsylvania, 1980, compiled and published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Data sources are given at the end of this report.

[3]Note that an area defined as rural at one Census can be urban at another.

[4]In 1970 and 1980, the population defined as eligible for the labor force included all those 16 years of age and older; in 1960, the age criterion was 14 years of age and older.

[5]A recent news release from the Pennsylvania Department of Health stated that in 1983, illegitimate births represented 20 percent of all births in Pennsylvania and 75 percent of births to teenagers (WRSC Radio, May 16, 1985).

[6]We recognize that this is not the scenario for all illegitimate births.

[7]Women also live in non-family units, e.g., alone, with friends, or in other types of families such as with their own parents.

[8]Other significant living arrangements include living with relatives other than a spouse and living in an institution such as a nursing home or home for the aged; in 1980, less than six percent of Pennsylvania's elderly population lived in group quarters.

Data for 1960, 1970, and 1980 were taken from the Census volumes for those years, *Characteristics of the Population, Pennsylvania*, compiled and published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Appropriate census tables and supplementary sources are indicated by topic.

Introduction, Residence, Race, and Age
1960: tables 16, 37.
1970: tables 20, 48.
1980: tables 19, 52, 62.

Education
1960: table 47.
1970: table 51.
1980: table 66.

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1960: table 52.
1970: table 53.
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1960: tables 66, 67, 139.
1970: tables 193, 198.
1980: table 71.

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1960: tables 18, 51.
1970: tables 22, 52.
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1970: tables 22, 52.
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